

REMARKS

Claims 1-13, 16 and 17 are pending in this application. In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being fully anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,987,472 (Serafin), and Claim 16 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Examiner objected to Claim 17 as being dependent from a rejected base claim, and indicated that Claim 17 would be allowed if appropriately re-written. Claim 16, it may be noted, was not rejected over the prior art.

Independent Claims 1, 6 and 11 are being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims, and Claim 17 is being rewritten in independent form including the limitations of Claim 1. Also, the rejection of Claim 16 is respectfully traversed.

For the reasons set forth below, Claim 16 fully complies with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 112, and all of Claims 1-13, 16 and 17 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. The Examiner is thus asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. 102, the rejection of Claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. 112, and the objection to Claim 17, and to allow Claims 1-13, 16 and 17.

With respect to Claim 17, as mentioned above, this claim is being rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of Claim 1. It is believed that this places Claim 17 in condition for allowance without any further amendments or arguments, and the

Examiner is asked to reconsider and to withdraw the objection to Claim 17 and to allow this claim.

With regard to Claim 16, the Examiner commented in the Office Action that the last four lines of the claim are not discussed in the specification, and thus rejected the claim under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. This part of Claim 16, however, is discussed in the example of the invention explained from page 4, line 22 to page 5, line 18.

The last four lines of Claim 16 refer to a situation where a search term has a plurality of words or sub-terms, none of the child documents include all of those words or sub-terms, but the formed index document does contain all the words. This is the point of the example of the invention given on pages 4 and 5 of the application. In that example, the search term is (pink near dress) and (9mm near shells). Each of these sub-terms occurs in one of the child documents, but no one child document has both of the sub-terms. Both terms do occur, though, in the index document formed in accordance with the present invention. Thus, the present invention enables a user to find the child documents that, taken together, have both of the sub-terms.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that the specification provides the appropriate support for the language of Claim 16, and the Examiner is asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. 112. Since, this claim was not rejected over the prior art, it is also believed that Claim 16 is now in condition for allowance.

Moreover, it is the formation and use of the above-discussed index document that distinguishes all of the pending claims from the prior art.

To elaborate, this invention, generally, relates to searching documents in a collaborative database. Generally, the documents in the database can be separated into two groups: parents and children, with each child document being associated with at least one of the parent documents.

When searching through a database of this general type, a difficulty may occur when a search term is comprised of two or more words. Even though such a search term may be highly relevant to a particular family of documents (a parent document and its related children documents), the search term might not occur, in its entirety, in any one of the family of documents.

The present invention effectively addresses this problem. The invention does this by combining the family of documents into a master, index document. Then, when a search is made, the search is made through that index document, rather than through the individual parent and child documents.

To make this master, index document, selected field items are taken from the parent document and placed as fields in the index document. Also, text is taken both from the parent and child documents and placed in the appropriate fields of the index document. Then, when a search is made for a given term, the fields of the index document are searched for that term.

In this way, a search term including two or more words may be found even if the term in its entirety does not occur in any one single document of the family.

The prior art does not disclose or suggest this way of forming an index document. In particular, Serafin discloses a method and system for cross referencing related sub-records in a database. To do this, a cross reference table is generated. Then, when one record is identified as including a given data item, the cross reference table may point to another record also having that data item.

More specifically, Serafin discloses a generic cross reference table that contains all the cross reference links for all the data items in all the data tables of a particular database. Each link is constituted by two records: a forward record and a reverse record. The forward record has a specified link from a data item in a first data table to a record or a data item in a second data table. The reverse record has the link from the data item in the second data table to the record or an item in the first data table. These links provide a generic capability to rapidly link pairs of data items between any two records of any two tables within the database.

The present invention is not primarily directed to cross referencing the documents, but instead is primarily directed to combining a family of documents to identify a family that includes a search term. In order to emphasize this aspect of the invention, independent Claims 1, 6 and 11 are being amended to indicate that when the index document is formed, all

the text of the parent and child documents is taken from those documents and put in the index document.

It is this feature that enables the present invention to be used effectively as a search tool, rather than simply as a cross referencing tool.

The other references of record have been reviewed, and these other references, whether they are considered individually or in combination, also fail to disclose or suggest the above-discusses aspect of the present invention.

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1, 6 and 11 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, Claims 1, 6 and 11 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-5 and 16 are dependent from Claim 1 and are allowable therewith. Likewise, Claims 7-10 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 6; and Claims 12 and 13 are dependent from Claim 11 and are allowable therewith. The Examiner is, accordingly, respectfully requested to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. §102, and to allow Claims 1-13 and 16.

For the reasons explained above, the Examiner is asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. 102, the rejection of Claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. 112, and the objection to Claim 17, and to allow Claims 1-13, 16 and 17. If the Examiner

believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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